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ABSTRACT

The paper describes a critical peer review developed at Napier Polytechnic (NP) of Edinburgh, Scotland for the evaluation and monitoring of its courses. Illustrations of the system are based on the accounting courses offered by the Department of Accounting and Law. The paper first describes the creation of NP from an amalgamation of two colleges in 1974. Next, the development of the peer review system itself is outlined. The necessity of accountability and quality assurance became apparent when the numbers of students and courses increased. An explanation of how the system evolved is presented. The Boards of Studies reports which had little or no course critique led to the development of Faculty Sub-Committees, and to improved communication between the sub-committees and the Faculty Board and Course Co-Ordinators regarding the annual monitoring and evaluation of the faculty's courses. Finally, a critical appraisal of the professional studies approach is provided, as well as the impact it had on the polytechnic. Case studies from the Department of Accounting and Law are presented. This document contains an index, an appendix (Council for National Academic Awards reports), and five references. (GLR)

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COMMUNICATE TO EVALUATE
A SCOTTISH POLYTECHNIC APPROACH

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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

12th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON HIGHER EDUCATION

QUALITY AND COMMUNICATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

UNIVERSITE CLAUDE BERNARD - ECOLE NORMALE SUPERIEURE, LYON

ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATE TO EVALUATE - A SCOTTISH POLYTECHNIC APPROACH

While working towards the attainment of fully accredited status, in relation to its CNAA taught courses, the Faculty of Professional Studies of Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh recognised the need for a system of critical peer review which would identify and remedy problems arising within individual courses, or across the Faculty as a whole, and which would ensure that the quality of all courses offered by the Faculty was maintained and improved.

This paper describes the development of this system, subsequently adopted throughout the Polytechnic, and illustrations are based on the Accounting courses offered by the Department of Accounting and Law.

INDEX

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Development of Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh 3

1.2 The Faculty of Professional Studies 4

1.3 The Department of Accounting and Law 5

2. REASONS FOR DEVELOPING A SYSTEM OF CRITICAL PEER REVIEW FOR THE ANNUAL MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF COURSES 7

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM

3.1 In the Beginning 7

3.2 The Establishment of Annual Reports Sub-Committees 9

3.3 The Refinement of the Professional Studies Sub-Committee Procedures 10

4 Critical Appraisal of the Professional Studies Approach to Annual Monitoring and Evaluation 13

5 The Impact of the Professional Studies Approach on the Polytechnic as a whole 14

6 Case Studies: Accounting Courses in the Department of Accounting and Law 15

6.1 Course Profile 15

6.2 Review of Annual Reports 16

7 Bibliography 19

8. Appendices

Appendix I :	Extract from the Confirmed Report Prepared by the CNAA Commitee for Institutions on the Institutional Review, March 1981	21
Appendix II :	Extract from the Confirmed Report Prepared by the CNAA Committee for Institutions on the Institutional Review, November 1986	23
Appendix III:	Accounting Courses in the Department of Accounting and Law	25
Appendix IV :	Course Co-ordinators, Courses and Dates of Sub-Committee Meetings	27

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Development of Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh

1.1.1 Napier Technical College

Napier Technical College, named after John Napier - inventor of the logarithims - opened on 7 September 1964 enrolling 4,400 day release students and 2,485 evening students on 73 courses, ranging from Scottish Certificate of Education at 'Ordinary' and 'Higher' grade, through City and Guilds Certificates to Higher National Certificate courses. The Tower of Merchiston, where John Napier was born in 1550, has been restored and refurbished, and remains the focal point of the Merchiston campus today.

1.1.2 Napier College of Commerce and Technology

On 1 October 1974, Napier - then known as Napier College of Science and Technology - merged with Edinburgh College of Commerce and the new Napier College of Commerce and Technology was born. Initially operating with a five faculty structure this number of faculties was reduced to four in 1977.

1.1.3 Course Development

By 1970 both Napier College of Science and Technology and the Edinburgh College of Commerce were preparing proposals for Degree courses to be validated by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), and the first of these proposals to be accepted was Napier's BSc in Science with Industrial Studies which was offered for the first time in Session 1971-72.

By 1975, following the merger, two CNAA Degree courses were being offered, and by 1981 30% of Napier's 4,200 FTE students were enrolled on 15 courses leading to CNAA awards.

Currently, in Session 1989-90, Napier offered 31 CNAA degree programmes and 13 Postgraduate courses, together with numerous undergraduate and professional courses, with some 67% of full time students enrolled on Degree and PostGraduate courses.

1.1.4 Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh -A Scottish Central Institution

Since the merger in 1974 Napier has expanded and developed to become the first centrally funded institution in Scotland to

be granted full 'accredited' status by the Council for National Academic Awards. As a result Napier has full responsibility for the validation and review of new and existing taught degree and post-graduate courses and has been invited by CNAA to apply for delegated authority to confer awards on Council's behalf with effect from 1 January 1991.

Today Napier is the largest public sector institution of Higher Education in Scotland, operating on six campuses and with approximately 8,500 students, of whom 5,000 attend on a full time basis. Its role and achievements in Higher Education were fully recognised when Parliament ratified the proposal that Napier be designated Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh with effect from 1 November 1988. The status of a 'Polytechnic' is clearly understood both nationally and internationally and this title is expected to benefit student recruitment and research both at home and overseas.

Employment prospects for Napier's graduates are exceptional with only 8.1% of the 1989 graduates and diplomates unemployed, or not available for employment six months after graduating.

1.2 The Faculty of Professional Studies

1.2.1 Its Birth

At the time of the amalgamation of the two colleges of Commerce and Technology in 1974, a five Faculty structure was adopted, namely of Science; Technology; Humanities; Industrial Resources and Management; and Business and Professional Studies. This number of faculties was reduced to four in 1977 with the amalgamation of the Faculty of Industrial Resources and Management and the Faculty of Business and Professional Studies, thus creating the Faculty of Professional Studies encompassing the Departments of Accounting; Banking and Insurance; Business Studies; Industrial and Social Studies; Law; Management Studies; and Office Administration.

1.2.2 Its Restructuring

In 1989, following extensive discussion at Faculty Board, the Faculty was re-organised and adopted its present day structure of six departments: Accounting and Law; Business Information Management (formerly Office Administration); Business Studies; Economics and Financial Studies (Banking and Insurance combined with the Economics section of Industrial and Social Studies); Industrial and Social Studies; and Management Studies. The Faculty offers a range of

courses from Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC and HND) through Degrees and Honours Degrees, to Postgraduate Diplomas and the Master of Business Administration, together with numerous professional courses. The Faculty of Professional Studies is the largest Faculty in the Polytechnic and in Session 1989-90 had 3,241 students enrolled, of which 1,511 attended full time, (2,254 Student FTE) and an Academic Staff establishment of 162.5 - 36% of the Polytechnic Academic Staff establishment. In May of this year the Polytechnic took the decision that, with effect from 1 Septemeber 1990, the Faculty should be known as 'The Napier Business School' for all external marketing purposes.

1.3 The Department of Accounting and Law

The Departments of Accounting and Law merged in 1989 to form one Department offering a range of full and part time courses in both disciplines, including HNC and HND courses in Accounting, Legal Studies, Police Studies and Public Administration; Professional courses at pre- and post- graduate levels for the Treasury, the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA); and the BA Accounting Degree. With a staff FTE establishment of 37 full time Academic Staff, led by Professor J E McLachlan, complemented by part time Academic staff and full and part time support staff, the Department enrolled 922 students (567 Student FTE) in Session 1989-90 - the highest departmental total within the Faculty of Professional Studies (Table 1).

2 Reasons for Developing a System of Critical Peer Review for the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation of Courses

The increasing size of the Faculty of Professional Studies, both in terms of student numbers (Table 2), and the number of courses offered, raised the issues of accountability and quality assurance and it was agreed by the Professional Studies Faculty Board that a formalised system of peer review was essential if Boards of Studies were to be held accountable for the health of their courses and if quality was to be maintained.

In addition it was recognised that CNAA would require evidence of effective course monitoring and evaluation if Napier was to become successful in its bid for Delegated Authority and Accredited Status (see Bibliography: November 1986).

3 Development of the System

3.1 In the Beginning

3.1.1 Course Annual Reports

Originally only those Boards of Studies responsible for courses leading to qualifications awarded under the auspices of CNAA were required to produce an annual report on the progress of their course. These reports were written in the Course Co-ordinator's individual style, each author addressing those areas deemed important or significant to the course in question. There was little attempt to critically appraise the success, or lack of success, of the course during the preceding academic session and there was little indication of possible future developments to enhance the course or to resolve identified problems. The reports were reviewed by the Parent Faculty Board and the College's Academic Planning Committee, with the Examinations Committee discussing student pass rates.

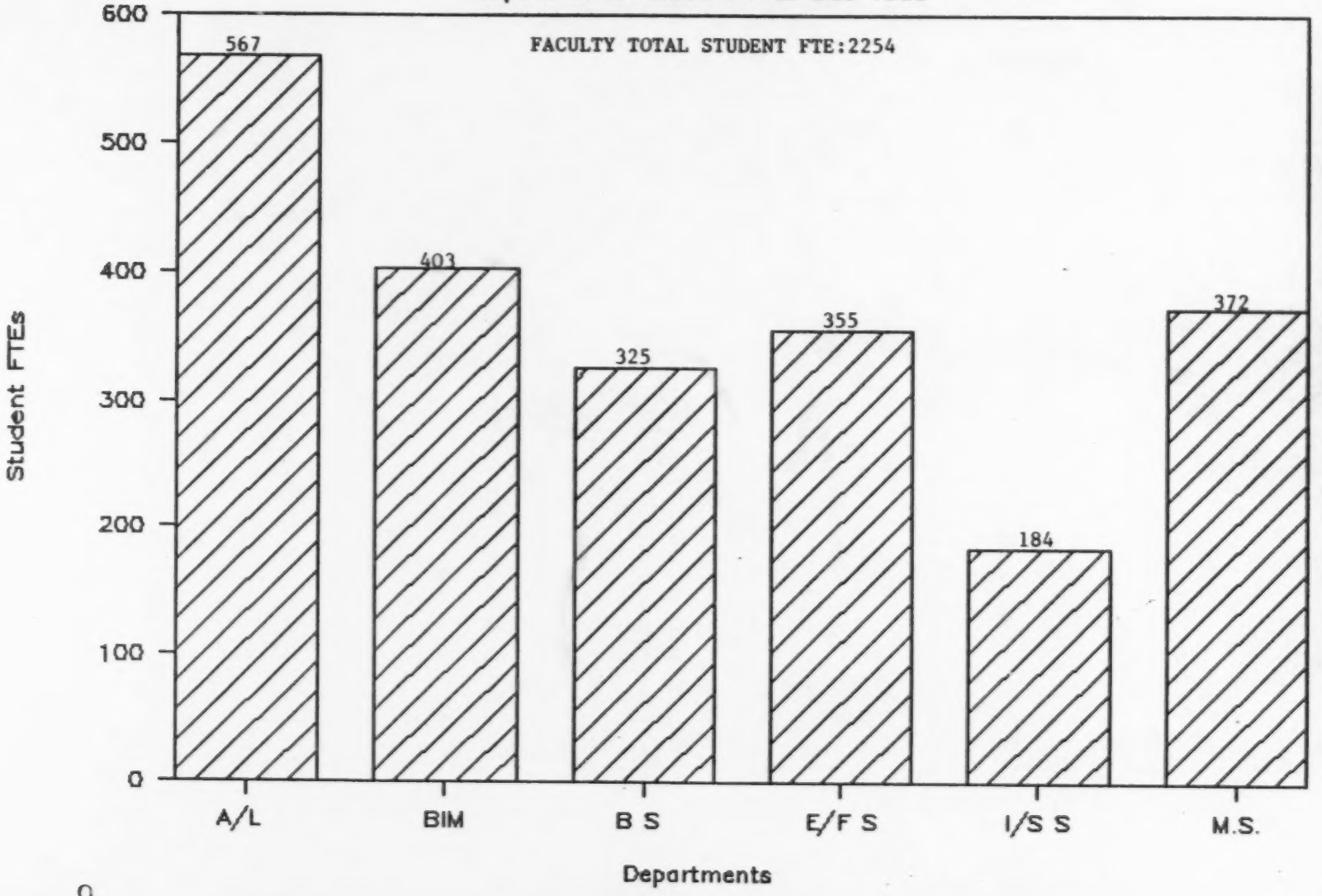
TABLE 1 NAPIER POLYTECHNIC OF EDINBURGH

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES:

DEPARTMENTAL STUDENT FTEs AT DECEMBER 1989

Faculty of Professional Studies:

Departmental Student FTEs Dec 1989



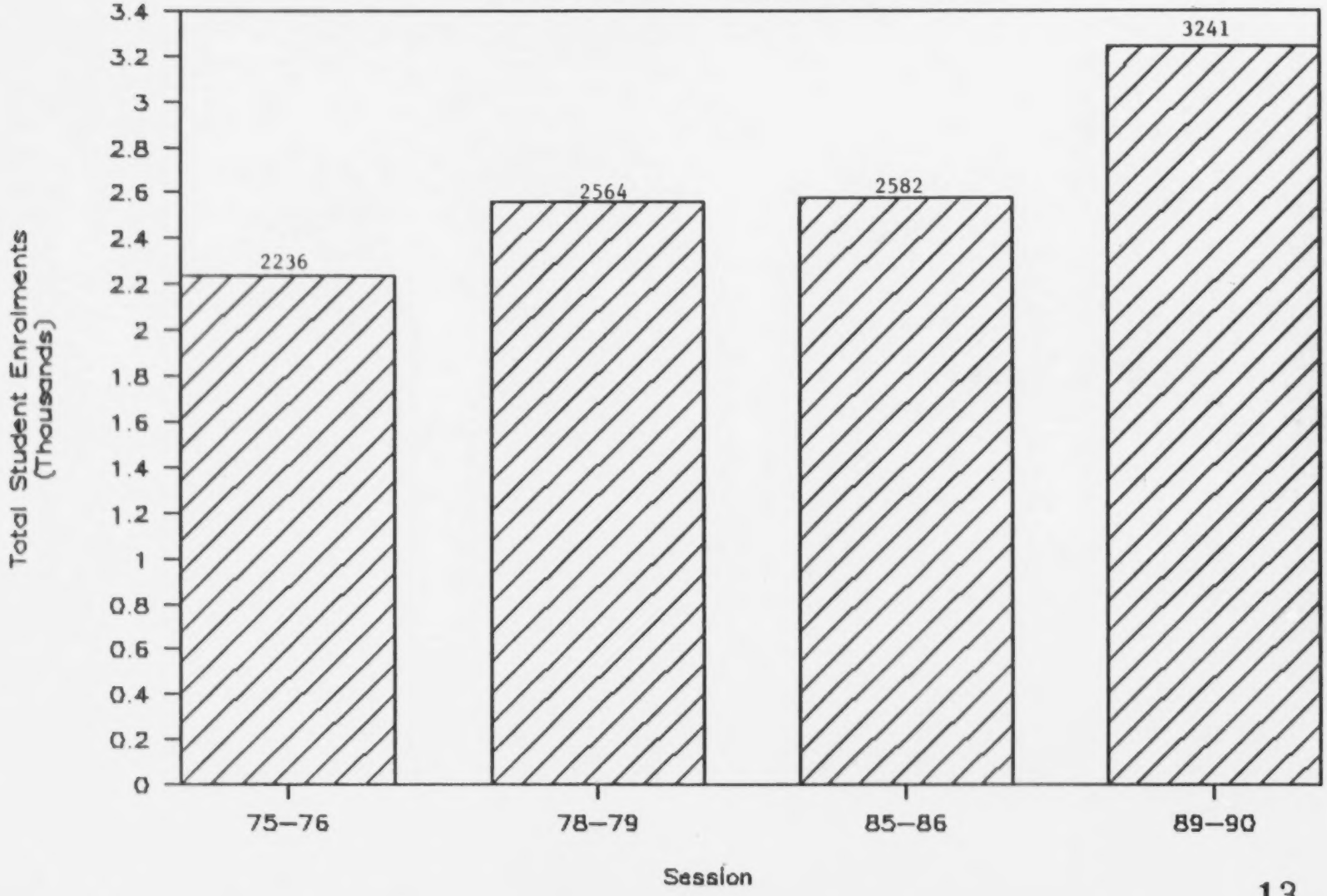
9

10

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING & LAW STUDENT FTE AS A % OF THE FACULTY TOTAL:25%

Faculty of Professional Studies:

Growth in Student Enrolments 1975–90



GROWTH RATE FROM 1975 to 1986 - 13.4%

GROWTH RATE FROM 1986 to 1990 - 20.3%

TABLE 2

NAPIER POLYTECHNIC OF EDINBURGH

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

GROWTH IN STUDENT ENROLMENTS 1975-1990

3.1.2 CNAA Institutional Review, March 1981

The report produced by the CNAA visiting party involved in the 1981 Institutional Review (Appendix 1) noted the procedure adopted by Napier for dealing with the course annual reports and recommended the adoption of more formal procedures for monitoring courses. The panel was of the opinion that the reports concentrated too heavily on quantitative and statistical information - based on the students' examination performance and progression - and did not address the identification of contributing factors to the students' success or failure, nor did they identify steps to be taken to remedy problem areas.

3.2 The Establishment of Annual Reports Sub-Committees

The comments made by the CNAA Institutional Review Visiting Party were taken on board College wide and the Professional Studies Faculty Board, at its meeting held on 30 October 1981, took the decision to establish a Sub-Committee, with a small, rotating membership, to review the Faculty's Course Annual Reports prior to their submission to the Faculty Board. In addition the Sub-Committee was charged with the responsibility for producing an overall report to advise the Faculty Board of any identified problems.

The Professional Studies Faculty Sub Committee on Annual Reports met for the first time early in 1982 to consider the course reports for Session 1980-81 and as a result of its deliberations, the Faculty Board identified areas worthy of further investigation and requested supplementary reports from a number of Boards of Studies.

While the establishment of Faculty Sub-Committees led to a more 'in depth' discussion of the Faculty's annual course reports, lack of standardisation of the content and the presentation of statistics, made it difficult to draw accurate comparisons or to identify emerging problems and trends.

The College Academic Planning Committee established an Ad Hoc Committee to address this problem and an Annual Report Pro-Forma was produced for use in the preparation of Session 1982-83 Annual Reports on Full Time Degree Courses. The Pro-Forma was amended slightly for use in the following year and separate Pro-Formas for Full Time Non Degree; Part Time Non Degree and Postgraduate courses were introduced for use from Session 1985-86.

While the introduction of a Faculty Sub-Committee approach had increased the level of discussion of the annual reports, the Professional Studies Faculty Board recognised that the level of communication with Course Co-Ordinators and Boards of Studies remained insufficient and in 1985 took steps to remedy the situation.

3.3 The Refinement of The Professional Studies Sub-Committee Procedures

3.3.1 Reasons for Change

a) To Improve Communication

The need for increased communication between Faculty Board (via its Sub-Committee) and Course Co-Ordinators and Boards of Studies regarding the annual monitoring and evaluation of the Faculty's courses was a contributing factor in the refinement of the annual course monitoring procedures.

b) To Improve the Effectiveness of Course Monitoring

In addition, following the transfer of the Polytechnic to Central Institution status and the establishment of a Governing Body, the College Committee structure was reviewed and an Academic Standards Committee established, replacing the Examinations Committee and charged with the responsibility, jointly with Faculties, for the academic validation of new courses and the evaluation and monitoring of existing courses (see Bibliography: November 1983). The increased importance placed on effective course monitoring procedures by Napier was evident particularly in view of its impending application to CNAA for delegated authority and accredited status.

c) To Ensure Efficient Monitoring of Increasing Course Provision

The increasing number of courses in the Faculty and the requirement that all courses, irrespective of mode of attendance or qualification awarded, must submit annual reports made it impossible for adequate discussion of the reports to take place at one meeting

of the Faculty Sub-Committee.

d) **To Make Best Use of Staff Expertise**

While considering ways of improving the system the Faculty Board recognised the advantages to be gained by incorporating peer review in the annual monitoring and evaluation procedures, not least of which was the opportunity for staff to utilise the expertise of their peers and the dissemination of best practice.

3.3.2 **Changes Introduced Since 1985**

a) **Procedural**

An important change in procedure was introduced in 1985 for the review of the annual reports relating to the 1984/85 session.

At the suggestion of the Dean of Faculty, each Course Co-ordinator was invited to attend the Sub-Committee meeting when his or her Annual Report was being discussed.

It was the unanimous view of all concerned that the increased communication between the Course Co-ordinators and the Sub-Committee had proved beneficial and effective and should be continued each year.

b) **Membership**

The membership of the Sub-Committee consisted of the Dean of Faculty and the three members of the Faculty Board who were in membership of the Academic Standards Committee. This membership was extended in 1989 with the addition of nine new members drawn from the Faculty as a whole. This extended membership reduced the burden on the original members, spreading the workload by no longer making it necessary for each member to attend every meeting of the Sub-Committee. In addition it provided valuable experience and staff development for those less familiar with the requirements of the annual monitoring and evaluation process and the policies and directives of the Academic Standards Committee. This

nucleus of Faculty staff bring their varied expertise to bear in a Peer Review of the management and operation of the Faculty's courses.

3.3.3 Current Conduct of Sub-Committee Meetings

A series of meetings of the Sub-Committee is scheduled in October/November each year at which Course Co-Ordinators are required to present their Annual Reports, prepared and agreed by the Course Board of Studies, to the members of the Sub Committee.

Before the commencement of the annual round of Sub-Committee meetings each member of the Sub-Committee is provided with the following set of papers for reference and for continuity purposes:

a) The Course Annual Reports to be reviewed and evaluated

b) The External Examiners' Reports for the previous academic session

c) The comments and recommendations made by the Sub-Committee in the previous academic session

Each Course Co-Ordinator is allocated a twenty minute time slot to discuss his/her course report with the Sub-Committee and the discussion centres on pass rates and student progression; problems identified by the course team and steps taken, or to be taken, to remedy such problems. Reference is made to the Sub-Committee's comments recorded the previous year to ensure that any difficulties discussed at that time have been resolved.

3.3.4 Follow Up Action

a) **Communication with the Faculty Board/Dean of Faculty**

Minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings, together with a final overall report prepared by the Sub-Committee, are submitted to the Faculty Board for discussion and action where appropriate. If necessary the Sub-Committee requests further information from Course Co-Ordinators, advises on appropriate action to be taken and brings to the attention of the Faculty Board

problems specific to individual courses and/or trends emerging across the Faculty as a whole. If a major problem is identified the matter is immediately referred directly to the Dean of Faculty. (Copies of the final Sub-Committee reports for Sessions 1981-82 to 1988-89 can be obtained on request).

b) **Communication with Course Co-Ordinators/Board of Studies**

A report on the discussion pertaining to an individual course is forwarded to the appropriate Course Co-ordinator for discussion at the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Studies.

c) **Communication with the Polytechnic's Academic Standards Committee**

The final Sub-Committee report, together with a report of the discussion undertaken by the Faculty Board, is submitted to the Academic Standards Sub-Committee on Annual Reports. In addition a selection of course annual reports are submitted as requested by that Sub-Committee. The remit of the Academic Standards Sub-Committee is to review the work undertaken by the Faculties in the area of annual monitoring and evaluation of their courses and to ensure that this task has been carried out thoroughly and effectively.

4 Critical Appraisal of the Professional Studies Approach to Annual Monitoring and Evaluation

The benefits of the Faculty's approach to annual course monitoring and evaluation have been many - not only for individual courses but also for the Faculty as a whole. The procedures as currently operated provide an effective system for reviewing and evaluating the ever growing number of courses offered by the Faculty of Professional Studies. Two way channels of communication have been established between Faculty staff, Boards of Studies, Course Co-Ordinators, Faculty Board and the Academic Standards Committee, and the staff as a whole see the annual report exercise as being worthwhile - knowing that their views will be taken on board, that advice based on expertise and practical experience can be given and sought, and that action will be taken at Faculty level when appropriate.

The knowledge that problems identified in the past will be focused on in the future has fostered a pro-active approach by course teams who take steps to identify the cause of any problems, and to resolve them, before the existence of such problems is disclosed to the Faculty Sub-Committee.

The system has encouraged the spread of best practice throughout the Faculty, has improved staff morale by bringing it home to Course Co-Ordinators and Course teams that problems are not necessarily unique to individual courses and that remedies for similar problems on other courses have already been found and have worked.

In taking an overview of the Faculty's courses the Sub-Committee has been able to identify trends and problems emerging across the Faculty requiring a Faculty approach to resolve the situation.

While the procedures are resource intensive in terms of staff time and effort the benefits derived from this system of annual course monitoring and evaluation have been recognised and welcomed by the Faculty as a whole.

5 The Impact of the Professional Studies Approach on the Polytechnic as a Whole

While the Faculties of Science and Technology had been the first to establish Faculty Sub-Committees to consider their course annual reports, these had been formal committees with no opportunity for open discussion with the Course Co-ordinators concerned.

The success of the Professional Studies Sub-Committee approach in actively involving the Course Co-ordinators to drive home the need for a constant pro-active approach to the maintenance and enhancement of the academic standard of the Faculty's courses led to the gradual adoption of the same system by the remaining three Faculties in the Polytechnic. By the date of the Accreditation visit by CNAA the procedures developed by the Faculty of Professional Studies were being operated throughout the Institution and the CNAA Visiting Party, in the report of its visit to the Polytechnic on 11/12 November 1986 (Appendix II) noted and commended the Faculty arrangements for the annual monitoring and evaluation of courses.

In September 1989, the first of annual meetings of the Academic Standards Sub-Committee on Annual Reports with Chairmen of the Faculty Sub-Committees and the Faculty Administrators took place to discuss the format of the annual reports; the procedures for their review and evaluation and the adoption of best practice throughout the Polytechnic. As a result of comments made at this

meeting a simplified Annual Report Pro Forma, for use by all courses throughout the Polytechnic, has been produced and will be piloted by nine courses in the Polytechnic in the preparation of the Course Annual Reports for Session 1989-90. The courses in the Faculty of Professional Studies selected to pilot the new Pro Forma are the part time BA Degree/Honours Degree in Applied Economics; the Post Graduate Diploma in Administrative and Information Management and the full time Chartered Association of Certified Accountants Course.

The successful and effective approach to annual course monitoring and evaluation has established efficient communication channels and has ensured the adoption of a pro-active approach to course management by the course teams throughout the Polytechnic enabling the parent Faculty Board and the Academic Standards Committee to accurately monitor the health of the courses on a continuous basis.

6 Case Studies: Accounting Courses in the Department of Accounting and Law

6.1 Course Profile

The accounting courses in the Department of Accounting and Law are shown in Appendix III. These courses provide a mix in several areas -

BA Accounting - a three year unclassified undergraduate degree giving entry with exemptions to the professional accounting examinations and recognised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland for exemption from their initial professional stage

HND Accounting- a two year full time diploma course giving entry with some exemptions to the professional accounting examinations

HNC Accounting- a one year full time, two year day release, or evening certificate course giving basic entry to the professional accounting examinations

ACCA Full Time- a full time, internally assessed course completing level 2 by internal examination and preparing the student for the final level 3 which is externally assessed

ACCA/CIMA - day release courses, one day a week, preparing students for levels 2 and 3 of the Chartered

Association of Certified Accountants and for Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

IIA (Treasury) - a block release course over two years preparing students for an internally set examination at level 1 and an external examination at level 2 for the Institute of Internal Auditors and the Treasury.

Information on the courses in the Department, the Course Co-ordinators (or leaders), and the dates on which the annual reports for each course were considered in Sessions 1984/85 to 1988/89 is given in Appendix IV.

It will be noted that all of the 1988/89 reports were considered by the end of October 1989, the earliest date of completion in the period under review. This benefits all concerned, as feedback is quicker and can be built into the next session's courses more easily. It depends on the annual reports being available, and the committee members and Course Co-ordinators being able to meet. The membership of the committee was expanded in the 1988/89 review.

6.2 Review of Annual Reports

6.2.1 The System As Applied to the Accounting Courses Annual Reports

Specific areas relating to the accounting courses which have been highlighted and discussed include the vexed areas of low pass rates in the professional externally assessed examinations when compared with the internally assessed examinations of the Polytechnic; the possibility of requesting additional resources; open entry to Day release courses; the encouragement of early counselling and remedial action for students diagnosed as being at risk as identified by coursework performance; the introduction of a maths access course; the position of students in relation to Government grants; the use of staff resources; the possible review of the certificate and diploma provision of the Department and joint meetings of Boards of Studies in the full time and part time ACCA courses.

6.2.2 Summary

To sum up, the system described in this paper has proved valuable in

a) extending good practice from one course to another

b) giving the Course Co-ordinators a forum outside their departments to discuss problems and opportunities

c) spreading information about courses through the faculty both formally, in the final review report, and informally by contact with panel members

d) providing an official end of session report to the faculty on the quality and strength of the courses in its area of reponsibility.

7. Bibliography

CNAA Institutional Review Part I: A Review of the Quinquennium 1981-1986: Napier College, Edinburgh (November 1986)

CNAA Institutional Review Part II: Proposed Delegated Authority and Accreditation Agreements: Napier College, Edinburgh (November 1986)

Academic Plan: Napier College (November 1983)

Application for Accreditation: Napier College, Edinburgh (August 1987)

Application for Accreditation - Supplementary Information: Napier College, Edinburgh (December 1987)

APPENDIX I

EXTRACT FROM THE CONFIRMED REPORT PREPARED BY THE COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL ACADEMIC AWARDS

REPORT of an
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW VISIT to
NAPIER COLLEGE OF COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY

on 24-25 MARCH 1981

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE FOR INSTITUTIONS

The Visiting Party is confident that the College can sustain the substantial progress achieved over the past quinquennium, and recommends to the Committee for Institutions that the College should remain in approval as an institution suitable for the conduct of courses leading to the Council's awards. It is recommended that the next institutional review visit should not be held before the 1985-86 academic year, but that, by the end of the autumn term 1983, the College should submit to the Council an agreed plan for academic development.

2.4 Course Monitoring

2.4.1 The Visiting Party concurred with the College's own judgement that the Academic Board needed to give further sustained consideration to the identification of appropriate course monitoring and evaluation objectives and procedures. The monitoring and maintenance of academic standards on courses leading to CNAA awards was currently initiated by the Boards of Studies, the annual reports from which were discussed subsequently by the Faculty Boards and by the Academic Planning Committee: it was expected, however, that problems would already have been identified and remedied at Board of Studies level, for instance through informal contact between course Co-ordinator and Dean.

2.4.2 The Visiting Party noted that the Academic Planning Committee was currently debating whether it should engage more positively in the course monitoring process during the third year of each quinquennial cycle, and encouraged the College to continue with its deliberations on how the Academic Board, acting through the Committee and Faculty Boards, might most appropriately satisfy itself that the academic standard of continuing courses was being maintained at an appropriate level, and that the interdisciplinary aims of the courses were being attained. It also encouraged the Academic Planning Committee to review the criteria that were being employed in the course monitoring process. It appeared to members that the information on which an assessment of the academic health of courses was being based by Faculty Boards was at present largely quantitative and derived from records of students' performance and progress: the College had not yet addressed itself sufficiently deliberately to an identification of the other elements contributing to the critical appraisal of a course.

APPENDIX II

EXTRACT FROM THE CONFIRMED REPORT BY THE COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL ACADEMIC AWARDS REVIEWS COORDINATING SUB-COMMITTEE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW of
NAPIER COLLEGE OF COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY
on 11 and 12 November 1986

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW AND DECISION OF THE REVIEWS COORDINATING SUB-COMMITTEE

The overall impression gained by the visiting party was of an institution which had adopted a thorough approach to the management of course development: the strong leadership of senior staff, the careful procedures and the well-developed administrative support were deployed with a sensitivity to the academic needs of courses and to the academic responsibilities vested in the Academic Board. The visiting party also welcomed the positive initiatives being taken to raise the level of awareness of, and engagement in, staff development and scholarly activity across the College, and encouraged the College to continue to devote particular attention to raising the level of research conducted in support of the curriculum.

In relation to the proposed institutional agreement, the visiting party believed that the level of confidence in the College it gained through the visit was high enough to justify the adoption of arrangements for the delegation of authority for course validation and review to the Academic Board, subject to clarification of matters relating to the development of a more judgemental approach to academic quality and the overall simplification of validation and review procedures under the auspices of the Academic Board.

VALIDATION AND REVIEW

On the faculty aspect, it emerged during discussion that the Academic Standards Committee's review of annual reports on courses, and of the faculties' comments on them, was designed to achieve consistency between the faculties, and that discretionary membership of scrutiny and validation panels was designed to compensate for unevenness within the faculties.

The visiting party welcomed the evidence received during the day that the Committee had taken valuable initiatives to ensure that good practice was fostered across the College. One such initiative, was in relation to its scrutiny of the effectiveness of faculties' arrangements for the annual monitoring of courses.

APPENDIX III

ACCOUNTING COURSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING & LAW

		ASSESSMENT	
		Internal	External
FULL TIME			
Degree	BA Accounting	x	
Diploma	HND Accounting		x
Certificate	HNC Accouting		x
Professional	ACCA Internally Assessed	x	
DAY RELEASE			
Certificate	HNC Accounting		x
Professional	ACCA		x
	CIMA		x
EVENING			
Certificate	HNC Accounting		x
BLOCK RELEASE			
	IIA	x	x

APPENDIX IV

COURSE CO-ORDINATORS, COURSES AND DATES OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

	ACADEMIC SESSION				
COURSES	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89
Full Time					
Degree BA Accounting	McLACHLAN 6/11/85	YOUNG 8/12/86	YOUNG 24/11/87	YOUNG 6/12/88	YOUNG 24/10/89
Diploma HND Accounting	BROWN 6/11/85	BROWN 8/12/86	BROWN 3/11/87	MacARTHUR 1/12/88	MacARTHUR 6/10/89
Certificate HNC Accounting	DYSON 14/1/86	DYSON 8/12/86	DYSON 23/11/87	STARK 23/11/88	STARK 25/10/89
Professional ACCA	DYSON 14/1/86	DYSON 8/12/86	DYSON 23/11/87	DYSON 22/11/88	DYSON 24/10/89
Day Release/Evening					
Certificate HNC Accounting	WRIGHT 2/12/85	DYSON 8/12/86	DYSON 23/11/87	DUNN 23/11/88	STARK 25/10/89
Day Release					
Professional ACCA/CIMA	WRIGHT 2/12/85	WRIGHT 8/12/86	WRIGHT 17/11/87	WRIGHT 22/11/88	WRIGHT 26/10/89
Block Release					
IIA (Treasury)	YOUNG 14/1/86	Course Did Not Run	Course Did Not Run	SIEVEWRIGHT 6/12/88	SAYWOOD 25/10/89
Consolidated Faculty Report to Faculty Board	17/1/86	6/3/87	22/1/88	20/1/89	19/1/90

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

12th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON HIGHER EDUCATION

QUALITY AND COMMUNICATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

UNIVERSITE CLAUDE BERNARD - ECOLE NORMALE SUPERIEURE, LYON

COMMUNICATE TO EVALUATE - A SCOTTISH POLYTECHNIC APPROACH

ANNUAL REPORTS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Professor J E McLachlan

Mrs V A Wood

INDEX

		Page
PAPER I	Report on Sessions 1981/82 - 1985/86	3
PAPER II	Report on Session 1984/85	5
PAPER III	Report on Session 1985/86	9
PAPER IV	Report on Session 1986/87	13
PAPER V	Report on Session 1987/88	17
PAPER VI	Report on Session 1988/89	19

PAPER I

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW 1986

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS

REPORT ON SESSIONS 1981/82 - 1985/86

For the past five years, the Faculty Board has maintained a sub-committee on Annual Reports, as part of its policy of monitoring academic standards within the Faculty. Each course within the Faculty is controlled by a Course Co-ordinator acting along with a Board of Studies, and each year, the Course Co-ordinators are required to submit an Annual Report to the Faculty Sub-Committee. This Annual Report will have been agreed in advance by the members of the course Board of Studies.

The Faculty has been fortunate in being able to maintain the same membership for the sub-committee during the entire five year period; since his appointment, the committee membership has also included the Dean of Faculty. For the Academic Session 1985/86, at the suggestion of the Dean of Faculty, the sub-committee was assisted in its consideration of each Board of Studies report by the presence at its meeting of the relevant Course Co-ordinator; it is the unanimous opinion of all those concerned that this has proved successful, and will be repeated in the future.

In the early years of the sub-committee's existence, one of the most frustrating problems was that of making the standard-form Annual Report form fit every type of course run by the Faculty. Bearing in mind that the original standard form was modelled on a CNAA Degree course, whereas the Faculty's own courses range from day-release Higher National Certificate to post-graduate professional diplomas, the form has not always proved appropriate. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that with increasing confidence and experience, Course Co-ordinators have been able to adapt and adjust the form more to the needs of their course. At the same time, the Academic Standards Committee of the College has been working on the production of a new form more appropriate for part-time courses.

It has also been most noticeable that whereas in the earlier years, problems in the administration of courses were highlighted without necessarily being solved, in more recent years, Boards of Studies have proved themselves more than capable of resolving problems almost as soon as they arise. In consequence, it has been a common feature of Annual Reports in more recent years for the Course Co-ordinator to report the fact that a problem arose, and then immediately thereafter report on how it was resolved within

a matter of weeks.

Several general trends are noticeable in the five years of the sub-committee's existence. The first of these is the continuing demand for graduates and diplomates of the Faculty's courses; several courses continue to report a 100% employment record for graduates or diplomates, and in certain cases, the course is unable to supply sufficient graduates to meet demand. At the same time there is a gradual widening in the type of organisations prepared to sponsor students on part-time courses run by the Faculty, and in many cases this initial contact between the Faculty and an employer has led to mutual benefits in other areas. Another noticeable trend has been an increase in the educational standards of those entering the College's courses; almost without exception, those courses for which a point 6 score analysis is appropriate have reported a gradual increase in the general average score achieved by those entering a Faculty course. Nevertheless, Course Co-ordinators continue to report the same basic student weaknesses in numeracy and basic literacy, and it cannot therefore be assumed that entrants to Faculty courses are better educated than they were in the past -it simply appears to be the case that they have obtained Higher grades in public examinations.

The experience gained by members of the sub-committee - who are themselves all members of the Academic Standards Committee of the College - has proved beneficial in many ways. It is now possible for the sub-committee itself to offer advice and guidance to Course Co-ordinators facing a new problem for the first time, by virtue of the vicarious experience of members of the sub-committee who have seen the same sort of problem solved on earlier occasions by other Course Co-ordinators. More and more, the sub-committee has become less of an inquisitorial body and more a medium of exchange of information and experience, a trend which it is believed is both healthy and worthy of encouragement.

All in all, it is believed that the exercise of establishing and maintaining a sub-committee on Annual Reports has resulted in the Faculty as a whole having travelled a good distance up the learning curve of self-validation. It has been very much a two-way exchange of information and guidance, and is believed to be partly responsible for the very noticeable increase in confidence and assurance displayed by Boards of Studies in courses throughout the Faculty.

David Field
Chairman
Faculty Sub-Committee
on Annual Reports

PAPER II

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS

REPORT ON SESSION 1984/85

1 The membership of the Committee was as follows:

D J Field (Chairman), P W McIntosh, D W N Stewart, M Wright.

2 The Committee met on a total of five occasions in December 1985 and January 1986, in order to consider Boards of Studies Reports for the Academic Session 1984/85. In the event, every single Report was received and considered by the Board with the exception of the SHNC in Public Administration.

3 The most important change to take place in procedure this Session was that, at the suggestion of the Dean of Faculty, each Course Co-ordinator was invited to attend the Committee Meeting during discussions concerning his or her Annual Report. It was the unanimous feeling of all concerned that this had proved most beneficial and effective, and it is proposed to continue with this arrangement in future years.

4 Course Co-ordinators reported less difficulty in using the standard form Report than in previous years, and those Course Co-Ordinators responsible for Part-time, or otherwise non-standard courses, are to be congratulated on their ingenuity in adapting what at best is a somewhat inadequate form. In certain cases the Committee was obliged to ask for a re-submission on individual items such as the POINT 6 score, and the student employment record, but on the whole, it would seem that Course Co-ordinators have worked hard at successfully overcoming the inadequacies of the form itself, which is in any case under review by the Academic Standards Committee.

Detailed comments on individual Reports may be found in the Minutes of all meetings held. However, the Committee would wish to bring the following general points to the attention of the Faculty Board.

a) those responsible for part-time tuition on courses leading to professional accounting qualifications continue to report a disturbing national pass-rate. Whilst the performance of Napier students in these courses is by no means below the national average - and in many cases could be a subject for congratulation - the Committee nevertheless wishes to express its concern at a situation in which a professional body or bodies encourages so many students to enter for professional examinations, only to fail at least 50% of these candidates at a fairly early stage in their potential careers. It is to be hoped that discussions can take place between the relevant Department and the professional bodies concerned to consider whether or not unrealistic standards are now being expected of students.

b) the Committee was considerably encouraged to note the high employment record obtained by graduates on certain courses; this success was particulary noticeable in the case of the Diploma for Graduate Secretaries, the SHND in Legal Studies, and the Diploma in Careers Guidance. At the same time, the Committee had been disappointed to note that in certain part-time courses in which students were in effect sponsored by their employers, the Course Co-ordinator had failed to include a list of sponsoring employers. Although this does not appear to be strictly required on the form itself, the Committee nevertheless feels it to be advantageous to be aware of which companies and organisations are taking an interest in part-time courses provided by the College, and requests that in future, as a general practice, Course Co-ordinators for such courses include a list of sponsoring employers.

5 A considerable number of Faculty courses now attract, mature students, and there is a noteable tendency for Course Co-ordinators, when completing the POINT 6 score chart, simply to designate such persons as "mature entry" without further specification. In fact, the Committee feel that it is of considerable value to note the educational achievements of mature entry students in earlier years of their career, even though this is not strictly required under the POINT 6 system. To take one example, in the case of the SHNC in Police Studies, all the students on which qualify under the "mature entry" category, it was discovered after further investigation that if one were to take into account Highers obtained by these students (who are all serving Police Officers) in the past 15 years, this

produced a cohort profile with a POINT 6 score more appropriate for entry to an Honours Degree.

6 In general, it was felt that Course Co-ordinators had made considerable efforts to overcome problems identified in the Reports, despite severe resource constraints. The problem of limited resources is now becoming more and more obvious in discussions with Course Co-ordinators, and while this problem is not one which is necessarily reported on the face of each Annual Report, it is a current theme in informal discussions between the Committee and Course Co-ordinators. It is the belief of the Committee that further expansions within the Faculty's courses, without a corresponding increase in available resources, can only result in falling standards.

7 Although as a general policy, the Committee does not wish to make specific comment on individual Annual Reports, nevertheless it feels compelled to bring to the Faculty's attention the fact that following a detailed enquiry at Departmental level into a disturbing second year pass-rate in the IPM course, and correspondence between the College and IPM, there appears to have been insufficient feedback to the members of the course team. As a result, the Committee was alarmed to note that the Course Co-ordinator was unable to give details to the Committee of what difficulties had been highlighted, and what steps were being proposed to resolve them.

8 In conclusion, the Committee is happy to report that the Faculty's courses appear to be in an excellent state of health, given the resource restrictions which now affect the Faculty. In addition, although in certain individual cases it was necessary to request a supplementary Report in order to amplify certain information provided on original Reports, as a general rule Course Co-ordinators appear to be making a commendable effort in reporting their activities for the year.

The Committee wish to record its deep debt of gratitude to the Faculty Administrative Assistant Vivienne Wood for the untiring and impeccable service which she provided to the Committee during the course of its meetings. Without considerable effort on her part, this Report could never have been produced at this stage in the Academic year.

David Field
Chairman
Faculty Sub-Committee
on Annual Reports

PAPER III

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS - REPORT ON SESSION 1985-86

The Committee consisted of D J Field (Chairman), P W McIntosh and D W N Stewart.

As in previous years, the sub-committee decided to meet on several occasions, considering a handful of reports on each occasion. It was also decided to repeat the successful experiment of last year whereby Course Co-ordinators were invited to meet with the sub-committee while the report was being considered. This once again proved successful, and will now be recommended as a permanent course of procedure.

In all, the committee met on 6 occasions during December 1986 and January 1987, and considered a total of 30 courses, each of which was represented by the appropriate Course Co-ordinator. The report, in each case, was for the Academic Year 1985/86.

As in previous years, it is proposed in this report simply to highlight general points arising, rather than deal with specific points raised by individual reports.

Overall, the sub-committee was encouraged to note a distinct improvement in the overall results obtained by students; this is not meant to imply that such results were unsatisfactory in the previous year, but simply that overall student success continues to improve.

However, the current pressure on staff is, clearly, beginning to manifest itself in problems of course administration, as members of staff concentrate their valuable time on the maintenance and improvement of academic standards, sometimes at the expense of efficient course administration. This was particulary true in those cases where senior members of staff are required to undertake responsibility as Course Co-ordinators for more than two or three courses.

A related problem which emerged more noticeably this year is the tendency to employ part-time staff. While it is appreciated that this cannot be avoided, it was very noticeable to the sub-committee that many of these part-time staff were deployed on day-release or HNC courses, where arguably staff with greater teaching experience are required. The problem is in many cases exacerbated by the difficulty of liaising with part-time staff on any day other than those upon which the course is being taught. Among the problems manifesting themselves in this context is that of staff cancelling classes without consulation with the Head of Department, and

the difficulties created by a situation in which a lecture is taken by one member of staff, and a tutorial by another. This creates enough difficulties where the two individuals are full-time members of staff, but where one of them is a part-timer, difficulties of liaison are now becoming very marked. Regrettably, the sub-committee also has to report a reluctance on the part of some Heads of Department to react to requests for staff changes, where difficulties have been experienced by the students.

Another noticeable trend in the case of HNC classes is the tendency to regard them simply as "feeders" to higher level courses, rather than courses in their own right. Quite apart from the fact that this perception is now well entrenched among staff, it is obvious that it is also becoming the perception of the students, many of whom are taking HNC courses merely as a means to obtaining entry to higher grade courses. While this tendency is not in any way criticised, it is disappointing to note that the HNC courses are in danger of losing their identity as self-standing courses.

A further trend which became noticeable from the reports this year is that where students are admitted into the middle of a course by means of an exemption, they are more likely to struggle with the rest of the course compared with those who have entered by the traditional method of taking Year I of the course first.

Another suggestion which the sub-committee would wish to make following upon its consideration of virtually every course offered in the Faculty is that in the case of degree courses, where later years require a great deal of integration of material, the earlier years of the course should be structured so as to give students a greater experience of adapting and developing the skills necessary to handle such an integration process. Experience suggests that it is not enough simply to give the students the knowledge and material with which to integrate, without also supplying them with the opportunity to develop the skills required to make that integration.

Finally, the sub-committee would respectfully wish the Careers Office to be encouraged to speed up the results of their surveys of students with a view to ascertaining what employment they obtained after completing a course; this is becoming an increasingly important aspect of course evaluation, but in some cases the information was unavailable some 6 months after the student graduated.

The Sub-Committee would wish to make the following recommendations.

1 It is recommended that urgent consideration be given to passing Course Co-ordinatorship down to members of the Lecturer A staff, leaving Senior Lecturers slightly more free to engage in academic leadership.

2 It is also recommended that Heads of Departments review carefully their policy of staffing of part-time courses with part-time lecturers.

3 It is recommended that all Boards of Studies for HNC courses consider carefully the role of their courses as educational experiences in their own right, and not simply as feeders to other courses.

4 It is recommended that those responsible for granting exemptions to students entering a later stage of course consider carefully the apparent tendency for such students to fail or withdraw from the course at an early stage.

5 It is further recommended that where later years of degree courses require integration as a learning experience, more consideration should be given to including in the earlier years of that course greater experience of handling the tools required to make such integration possible.

6 It is finally recommended that liaison be undertaken with the Careers Office to make basic data on graduate employment success available before each Annual Report.

In concluding this report, the sub-committee would once again wish to express its grateful thanks for the cheerful efficiency of our Faculty Assistant Vivienne Wood, without whose untiring efforts this entire process of course validation would either not have occurred at all, or would have taken months longer than it did.

David Field
Head of Department
of Law

PAPER IV

PROFESSIONAL STUDIES FACULTY SUB COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS

REPORT ON ANNUAL REPORTS FOR THE ACADEMIC SESSION 1986/87

The Committee for the above consisted of the following:

D J Field (Chairman), P W McIntosh; D W N Stewart (ex officio); J Troy; D Young.

The Committee met on 7 occasions during the month of November, and as in previous years, each meeting consisted of a detailed consideration of a small group of annual reports. On every occasion, either the Course Co-ordinator of the relevant course under consideration, or his Deputy, was present.

The system for monitoring annual reports has obviously now entered a new phase of operation, and a high degree of experience and sophistication is evident in the manner in which the courses are considered, and in the responses of the Course Co-ordinators. In every case, the sub-committee was gratified to note that where a particular course had experienced a difficulty during the session, it had more than adequately coped with it where this was possible. As a result, the sub-committee now finds itself in the happy position of commenting on the solutions adopted rather than giving advice on possible solutions.

As in previous years, the sub-committee does not consider it necessary to bring to the attention of the Faculty any particular report. It is pleased to be able to confirm that in general terms, all the Faculty's courses are in robust health, and well managed by enthusiastic and dedicated course teams. However, during the course of the discussions, various common threads and trends emerged, and these obviously require to be brought to the attention of the Faculty Board.

The first observation is that the Faculty would appear to be well on its way towards achieving a balance and mix of courses which not only meets the needs of the local community, but provides educational opportunity for students from a wide geographical area. It is also becoming more apparent that the Faculty's courses are integrating in a satisfactory manner at the 3 different levels of certificate, diploma and degree. It was particularly notable that our certificate courses, whilst retaining all the qualities of a "stand alone" set of courses, are being regarded, by students and staff alike, as an obvious "feeder" to the diploma and degree courses. This is regarded as an important and inevitable development for the Faculty, and augers well for the effective implementation of the Faculty's furture strategy.

Although the common first year of degree courses was not implemented until September of this year, and therefore technically remains outside the ambit of this report, the sub-committee took the opportunity, on every relevant occasion, to enquire into experience on the common first year thus far into its first session. It is happy to report that the course teams for the relevant degree courses have experienced no difficulties with the common first year, but have instead entered into it with enthusiasm and optimism. No Course Co-ordinator reported any adverse reaction from the students themselves, nor was any difficulty anticipated in coming years, when the students enter their own individual courses.

As in previous years, staff resources have in some areas of some courses proved to be barely adequate. This has led in some cases to the usual problems experienced when members of staff are exchanged, are ill or are re-routed by their Heads of Departments. As in previous years, the sub-committee can only exhort Heads of Departments to enter into discussion with course teams with a view to securing the most effective personnel allocation to a course.

There have been some problems with physical resources, as is perhaps inevitable in the circumstances in which the College finds itself, but the sub-committee was greatly encouraged by the fortitude - and sometimes the ingenuity - with which these problems were overcome. In many cases, however, the sub-committee was concerned to note the additional burden which resource difficulties placed upon course teams in general, and Course Co-ordinators in particular.

The sub-committee was particulary heartened to note the impressive and relevant employment record of graduates from Faculty courses. In some cases, certain courses provided by this Faculty are the only available source of specific career education for students throughout a vast area of Scotland, and in one case the UK. It is clear that students from courses within our Faculty are held in high regard by employers, who frequently seek out "more of the same" as the result of their experience with College graduates whom they have employed in the past. An impressive array of national and local industry and commerce is also represented in the sponsoring firms for our part-time courses.

In the vast majority of cases, the Faculty course teams also appear to have forged impressive links with local industry and commerce, both in respect of the sponsoring of students on courses and on eventual employment. Given the general economic decline which was experienced during the previous session, this is an achievement of which the Faculty can be justly proud.

The sub-committee cannot, however, let this opportunity pass without recording its grave concern over the number of complaints which it received from Course Co-ordinators concerning communications with SCOTVEC. This was particularly manifest in respect of the May 1987 Examination Diets, and the many appeals and queries which were raised by students

and staff alike in respect of the results. In many cases, the sub-committee was alarmed to discover that Course Co-ordinators, despite considerable efforts on their part, still retained substantial files of unanswered correspondence from SCOTVEC. It is understood that this problem is being raised elsewhere, and at a higher level, but the sub-committee is concerned at having to report that on many occasions, this lack of communication has led to difficulties with course administration.

All in all, the sub-committee found course teams to be in a bouyant frame of mind, and very confident concerning the future. There appeared to be no major obstacles standing in the way of continued academic success and course relevance. All those concerned with the administration of the Faculty's courses are to be congratulated on their achievements in the face of various adversities. As the date draws near for the College's application for Accreditation, the sub-committee has every confidence that the machinery of the Faculty is more than adequate to cope with the process of annual monitoring, and that all course teams are fully aware of their responsibilities, and eager to continue to play a major role in the work of self-validation.

David Field
Chairman

PAPER V

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS FOR THE ACADEMIC SESSION 1987/88

1 Membership of Sub-Committee

D J Field (Department of Law, Chairman), M Brennan (Business Studies), M Haddow (Office Administration), E Milligan (Dean of Faculty), J Troy (Industrial and Social Studies), D O Young (Accounting).

2 Meetings of Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee met on a total of 6 occasions during November and December, and considered all but one of the Annual Reports for the Faculty.

3 Report to Faculty

The Sub-Committee is pleased to report to the Faculty that in general, its courses appear to be in an excellent state of health. In most cases, the student numbers have increased on the previous session, and in the case of newer courses, the advertising policy pursued by the course teams appears to have been particularly fruitful. In addition, the Sub-Committee is pleased to report that the Faculty's graduates appear to enjoy very favourable employment prospects upon completion of Faculty courses.

All this is due largely to the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff concerned, who are to be congratulated upon their magnificent efforts in the face of increasing resource problems. The expertise of Faculty staff is illustrated in a variety of ways, not the least of which being the rapid development of Faculty-led courses at Higher National Diploma level, as the Faculty moves rapidly away from the SCOTVEC-led equivalents which until recently dominated the sub-degree work of the Faculty. In several notable cases, the pilot courses produced by members of the Faculty (sometimes at the request of SCOTVEC) have served as a model for other Colleges throughout Scotland.

None of this has been achieved without considerable expense, the most obvious, and the most alarming, being the mounting pressures upon staff. As in previous years, the Sub-Committee is concerned to have to report that most of the substantial achievements in the previous session were secured in the absence of any additional resources. Although physical resources appear to have improved (notably in the area of information

technology generally), more and more work is being expected of the same staff. This is particularly noticeable in two areas.

The first is the development of College-led courses to replace those previously administered by SCOTVEC. Little consideration seems to have been given to the fact that such a change will in every case place upon the staff concerned a considerably increased administrative burden, quite apart from the academic one of setting and marking examination papers. While staff appear to have set about this task with enthusiasm, it is disappointing to note that there has been no equivalent recognition at Faculty or College level in the form of increased staff resources.

The second problem area concerns those courses which are aimed at part-time students. It is established College and Faculty policy to encourage the development of such courses, but in those areas in which such courses are not well advanced (notably in the part-time degree in Business Studies), it is increasingly apparent that staff are finding difficulty in coping with the level of pastoral support required for such students. This has reached the stage at which the continued advisability of residential weekends is being questioned, not so much on academic grounds as upon resource considerations. If the Faculty wishes to proceed on its chosen course of introducing more and more part-time courses, then this problem must be resolved in the very near future.

In reviewing the academic session 1987/88 the Sub-Committee paid particular attention to the outcome of the common first year in its degree courses. While the effect of the common first year upon Faculty students has been considered very fully elsewhere, the Sub-Committee would wish to add its own conclusion, to the effect that whilst the first year itself appears to have been very successful, it will be necessary to monitor its knock-on effects in the second year of each of the constituent courses, the reports on which will of course be considered by the Sub-Committee in November of this year.

It is also gratifying to be able to report that in every single case in which a Course Co-ordinator was obliged to advise the Sub-Committee of problems which had arisen during the course of the session, he or she was also able to report a satisfactory solution.

As in previous years, the Sub-Committee would wish to record its gratitude and admiration for the work carried out by Vivienne Wood, as Administrative Assistant to the Faculty, in co-ordinating the work of the Sub-Committee. The fact that all the tasks facing the Sub-Committee were completed on time is almost entirely due to her cheerful efficiency.

David Field
Chairman

11 January 1989

PAPER VI

NAPIER POLYTECHNIC OF EDINBURGH

FACULTY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORTS FOR SESSION 1988-89

1 Membership of the Sub-Committee

J Troy (ISS, Chairman); E Milligan (Dean of Faculty); D Young (Accounting); M Haddow (BIM); M Brennan (Business Studies); D Clark (EFS); A McCleery (ISS); J Thomson (Management Studies); J McLachlan (Accounting); R Hamilton (Business Studies); M Brownrigg (EFS); D Stobie (Mangement Studies).

2 Meetings of the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee met on five occasions during October and this report summarises the main points which emerged from the minutes of these meetings. Detailed comments on each course have been expressed in these minutes and it is not the intention of this report to duplicate this information.

3 Report to the Faculty

The Sub-Committee is able to report that, in the main, Faculty courses have enjoyed a successful year in terms of pass rates, student progression and favourable employment prospects. In those cases where pass rates were considered 'low', course Co-ordinators (CCs) were able to explain the position to members in terms of national pass rates. This was particularly true of the Professional courses run in the Faculty where Napier results were, generally, above the national average.

The main issues arising from these meetings for consideration by the Faculty Board are:

(a) The Timing of Report Submissions. It was considered that (particularly in the case of SCOTVEC courses) the submission of reports by October means that resit information and student employment records could not be up-to-date. The Sub-

Committee feel that these reviews should take place later in the session and that this point should be raised at Academic Standards.

(b) Annual Report Formats. With a move towards more flexible entry for students and the introduction of pilot courses in the Faculty, it was considered that there is a need to provide CCs with a more coherent Annual Report form. Information from the Courses Validation Unit indicates that new forms will be available for Session 1989-90.

(c) Critical Appraisals. There was a wide diversity in the quality and detail of these sections. Where appropriate, the Sub-Committee members encouraged CCs to use this section to illustrate concerns, resource problems etc, of the course in general and not to submit Subject Leaders reports or stick rigidly to the headings given.

From a positive viewpoint it is suggested that the approach and structure provided in some of these Annual Reports could be made available to all CCs to help improve the quality of our critical appraisals.

For example: B A Commerce
B A Accounting
ACCA, CIMA

were good examples from the set of Reports which were reviewed.

(d) Resources. Concern was expressed at the high SSR figures on most of the Faculty courses, and while this was not reflected in student performance, many of the CCs took the opportunity to indicate the pressures that had been placed on course teams with more students and new course development. The Professional Accounting Bodies Board of Studies, for example has requested that the resource problems being faced by the Professional part-time courses should be included in this Report. A revision of calculated FTE's for part-time courses may, in time, lead to more resources for Faculty courses although the resource problems of our full-time courses will continue to cause concern. The Sub-Committee feel that this particular issue should be put on the Agenda for the next Faculty Board and an agreed statement sent to Academic Standards.

(e) The Common First Year. While the common first year was not discussed specifically at our meetings the Sub-Committee is able to report that the pass rates for each of the three degree courses were very good and compared favourably to the successful 1987/88 entry. This is a significant point as the

Faculty moves towards more flexible entry schemes and modularisation of courses in the future.

(f) SCOTVEC Pilot Schemes. These were particularly succcessful and the Sub-Committee noted the amount of staff time which had gone into developing these pilot schemes. It was noted that the Annual Report format could not indicate the resource intensity of these schemes.

In comparison with last year's minutes, the Sub-Committee have to report the concern expressed by the CCs of the administrative complexities in dealing with SCOTVEC. The position seems to be worse.

(g) Conclusions. At the time of writing most of the responses from CCs who were requested to amend their Annual Reports have been submitted as have the majority of External Examiners' reports. The larger number of students taking courses in the Faculty has led to an increased work-load on staff outwith the classroom environment and the Sub-Committee would wish to draw this to the attention of the Faculty Board.

The examination and discussion of Annual Reports is very time consuming and I would wish to thank the members of the Sub-Committee for the time they gave. In addition, the secretarial support, editing of minutes and their circulation was carried out by Vivienne Wood and, in her absence, by other members of the Polytechnic's administrative staff. They are also due our thanks.

JOHN TROY
Chairman
15 January 1990

END

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